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LETTERS OF THE REV. GRIFFITH HUGHES, OF ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, RADNOR, PENNA., 1733-1736.

BY BENJAMIN F. OWEN.

[While examining the records pertaining to the early settlement of Comru Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, the abandoned site of an Anglican Church and graveyard was discovered, which had been used by the Welsh settlers of the district. A personal inspection of the ground led to the finding of two gravestones, one to the memory of Hugh Jones, an early settler and large land-owner, who died in 1734, and the other to his daughter Jane, who died in 1730. It was further developed that Jones had, by will, bequeathed the land in Comru and also a horse to the Rev. Griffith Hughes, a missionary of the "Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts," who was in charge of St. David's Church at Radnor. As the "Historical Collections relative to the American Colonial Church," by the late Bishop Perry, contains but very little data relating to the Rev. Mr. Hughes, researches were made in the Archives of the "S. P. G." Society, in London, and the following interesting and valuable letters and documents covering the period of his labors in Pennsylvania were found.

Griffith Hughes, son of Edward Hughes, of Towyn, Merionethshire, Wales, was born about 1707. He matriculated at St. John's College, Oxford, in 1729, and received the degrees of B.A. and M.A. in 1748. In 1733 he was sent by the Society to Pennsylvania, where he labored at St. David's, Radnor, and also among the Welsh settlers in Lancaster and what is now Berks counties. His health failing, he left for the Island of Barbadoes, where he became Rector of St. Lucy's Parish. In 1750 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society and published his "Natural History of Barbadoes," a royal folio of three hundred and twenty-four pages, illustrated with twenty-nine plates and dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Library Company of Philadelphia appears among the names of American subscribers to the work, and possesses several copies. He also prepared for the Philosophical Society (England) a paper on "A Zoophyton resembling the flower of the Marigold." The date of death of Mr. Hughes has not been ascertained.]

The Testimonials of Mr. Griffith Hughes.

SIR:

Our Statutes do not suppose any person of y^r Society to be in holy orders before he has taken his degrees of Bachelor of Arts and therefore letters Testimonial under our College Seal cannot regularly be granted to Mr. Hughes, for that purpose; But as a Certificate of his good behaviour is necessary at present, before a particular occasion, I beg leave to acquaint you, that during the time he has been with us, which is fourteen terms, he has behaved well, and seems worthy of any favours, wch the Bishop of London or the Honorable Society may confer upon him.

I am Sir—you most humbe serv^t

W. HOLMES

ST. JOHN'S COLLG^e
OXON, July 29th 1732.

This is to Certify whom it may concern that Griffith Hughs of St. Johns Collg^e in the University of Oxford, hath for these 3 years last past behaved himself soberly and regularly, according to the Statutes of the said College, and as far as we apprehend, is a person perfectly qualified to stand Candidate for Holy Orders, and holds nothing Contrary to the Doctrines of the Church of England.

Augt ye 1st 1732
F. WEST, D. D.
J. DRY, B. D

Witness our hands
WM. HOLMES, *President*
WM. BRIDGE, D:D:
WINCH. HOLDSWORTH, D:D:
S. BIGNELL, D:D:

ROB. PEMBERTON A:D: *Dec. Art.*
JA^s SUCK, A.M. *Dec. Art.*

Mr. Hughes to the Secretary of "S. P. G."

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, July 1st 1732.

REVER^D SIR

I had the honour of being Recommended to you by Doc^r Pardo, to succeed in the vacancy in Pensilvania and by his advice I have since done myself the pleasure of writing to

you, in order to be inform'd of the particular encouragm^{t} & how soon the vacancy must be supplyed, and whether it will serve for a Title to go to orders, I can't persuade myself that you have rece'vd my last, therefore I beg that you would honour me with an expeditious answer to this which will

Reverend Sir
very much oblige your very
Humble serv^{t} to Command
GRI: HUGHES

Direct for me at
St. Johns College, Oxon,
and let me know when the next Society will meet.

Mr. Hughes to the Secretary "S. P. G."

RADNOR; PENSILVANIA, Mar: 2nd 1733.

REVERED SIR:

I have the pleasure of acquainting the honorable Society at my first entry upon my mission. I was very kindly Receiv'd especially by the Welch in my Immediate proceedings after my arrival I endeavourd at those methods y^{t} would best answer the Trust reposed in me, and to y^{t} end besides performing those duties y^{t} particularly belong to my office I have visited all my Parishioners at their respected houses, and found a great many of them much neglected in their Education & Ignorant of the very fundamentalls of Religion. Others whose principles were very much vitiated with false doctrines I endeavour'd to rectifye the mistakes of the Latter and to Instruct the former what was necessary to be believed and practised; I had no sooner finished this task then I found a great necessity of visiting a great many Welch and English Gent^{m} y^{t} lived far back in the Woods, where I found a great number of well Disposed persons But Intirely Destitute of a Minister at their earnest request I have gone there severall times since, and for a long time had no other place to preach but under the Shade of a Large tree their houses being too small to contain the great

number that resorted there, my last Journey to them Compleated in all one Thousand one Hundred and five miles besides my weekly attendance at Radnor, & Perquihoma, at either of which Churches, I preach and Catechize every Sunday: The number of Communicants in Radnor at my first Comeing was 48 now Increased to 55 at Perquihoma 19 Encreased to 21 I have Christened in all near 100, Ten of them being adults, This being all that offers at present from the Honble Society in Generall and your most

Obedient humble Servant

GEO: HUGHES.

Churchwardens & Vestry to ye Secret^y^ "S. P. G."

RADNOR, PENSILVANIA Sep^t^. 25th 1734.

We the Vestrymen & Ch^ch^ Wardens of St. David, Church at Radnor in ye Province of Pensilvania, do beg leave to Return the Honble Society for the propogation of the Gospell in foreign parts; our Sincere thanks for their favour & great goodness, in sending the Rev^d^ Mr. Hughes, to be our Missionary who not only, so well officiates in ye Welch tongue, but also by his great care, learning and Piety sufficiently demonstrates the Honorable Society's most prudent Choice

We all remain as in duty bound the Honourable Society's most obedient and most obliged Humble Servants.

Thos. Godfrey, Wm. Owen, Thos: James, Joseph Jones, Wm. Jones, John Currey, Hugh Hughes, James David, Evan David, Morrifs Griffith, Wm. Evans, Peter Elliot. Jacob Jones, John Hughes, Hugh David,

Mr. Hughes to the Secretary "S. P. G."

RADNOR PENSILVANIA, Decenb^r^ 3^d^ 1734.

REV^D^ SIR

Since my last I have nothing worth notice to acquaint you and the Hon. Society except that I have made severall Journeys to visit the back Inhabitants. Sometimes 60 or

70 miles from home where I Cristened a great number But in more particular at Canistoga where for some time past I preached both in Welch & English, on the first Tuesday in every month: and have at present the pleasure of seeing the number of Communicants there from Twelve Increased to Twenty Six all sober well Disposed persons—The greatest Inconveniency that we labour under is the greatest scarcity of Welch Books, myself being the only person that officiates in that Language my Best endeavour can bear no proportion to the generall want of so many Thousands of that nation who are scattered in this province, & dayly Importune me to Supply them with Welch Books and most of them are both able & willing to purchase y^{m}: and I humbly conceive that their Expectations were answered it would be (especially where Orthodox ministers are wanting) the only means to keep our Religion in its purity among so many disadvantages I would rather be thought Impertinent in troubling the Honourable Society with my Sentiments upon this Head—than Blame myself, for not endeavouring at so great an act of Charity that may with the Blefsing of God put a stop to those fatal consequencys, which by Daily Experience we find to be Occasioned in a Great Measure, by the want of Good Books and if the Honourable Society who have hitherto distinguished themselves by a Continuell series of benevolent & Charitable actions will so far encourage This as to permit me to Come to London ye Latter end of next Sumer I doubt not but in a short time with the assistance of a worthy Gentleman now In Jesus College we shall be able to reprint or Translate a sufficient number to answer ye present necessity. The favour of Hearing from you early in the Spring will very much oblige

Sir—yours and the Honoura^{ble} Societys

most Humble and obedient Servant

GRIFFITH HUGHES.

The Inhabitants of Canestogoe to the "S. P. G."

PENSILVANIA. 1734

May it please the Hon: Society for propagating the Gospell in foreign parts.

The Petition of the underneath subscribers at Canestogoe Humbly Sheweth.

That we being well affected to the Church of England tho: Destitute for severall years of an Orthodox minister until the Comeing of our Dear Countryman Mr. Hughes, who hath undergone great Hardship to come and preach to us once a month to our great comfort; we are Increased very much in members since his Comeing, and since we can't as yet expect the Happineſs of a Missionary we humbly pray to be supplied with some Welch Books, the want of which has been our greatest unhappineſs, an unhappy experience of this we have had, in ye number of Forty Families that were Educated in the principles of the Church of England, that came in together yet for the want of Good Books in their own Language, they at last yielded to the General Coruption of Quakerism—would the Honourable Society be pleased to Bestow on us a Welch Bible and Common prayer for the use of our Church, your Petitioners should esteem it as a great favour; At Mr. Hughes first arrivall we had no other Conveniency than the shade of any Large Tree to preach under, but now we have built a Handsome Church—as for the other Welch books we are willing to purchase them at any Reasonable rate we have entrusted the Rev[d] Mr. Hughes, to take the trouble upon him to Come over, and get us such a quantity as will be answerable to our want—if this be agreable to the Hon: Society's pleasure it will be a great Encouragement to our pure doctrine & be a means in the hand of Providence to preserve many Souls from false Doctrine and Schism which unhappineſs we have to often Experienced.

We hope that your Charity which hath already Distinguished itself, for the Eternal Welfare of so many Souls,

will encourage this one humble request and until we Can hope for a Missionary beg to be supplyed at any rate with Welch Books, which is the earnest Request and the Humble petition of the undernamed, and indeed of our whole Church here in generall.

And your Petitioners as in Duty bound shall ever pray

George Hudson,	Jenkin David,	John Edwards,
John Davies,	John Brown,	Badam David,
Edward Davies,	Morgan John,	John David,
Evan Hughes,	Solomon Thomas,	Zacheus David,
Edward Nicholas,	Gab[l] Davies,	W[m] Willy,
Roger Parry,	Phillip David,	Edward Thomas,
Morgan–Morgans,	Hugh David,	John Jones,
John Evans,	Nathan[l] Evans,	Morifs Richard.

Mr. Hughes to ye Lord Bp: of London.

RADNOR IN PENSILVANIA, Sep: 10th 1735.

MY LORD

When I consider that your Lordships with the rest of the Hon: Society have already so remarkably distinguished y[r] Selves by acts of Universal benevolence & Charity I hope the same goodnefs will excuse the trouble of receiving this w[ch] comes to Inform your lordshipp in my 2 last Letters to the Society unanswered I have Petitioned in the name of some hundreds of my Countrymen to be permitted for a very short time to return home to reprint and at their expence to supply them with Welch Books y[e] want of which is so universal that it has been the Chief occasion of the Increase of so many Dissenters nothing but such an absolute necessity c[d] come in Competition wth y[e] due regard I always had for y[r] Lordship: could have obliged me to give you this trouble tho I would almost chuse to trespafs upon y[r] Lship's goodness then be in the least wanting to promote an Act w[ch] wth the Blessing of God may be of so happy a consequence & were not my Comeing to England without the previous Consent of y[r] Lordship & y[e] Hon[l] Society to great a presumption y[e] present would be the most proper

opportunity if my absence would be Dispenced with for lately in my way to perquihoma Church I had the misfortune to break my knee pan, which Continues tho upon the mending hand very weak so that it is Impossible, for me in my present Condition to serve that Church in a Regular order this present winter, that and severall other hardshipps which I have with pleasure almost endured in my severall Journeys to preach among the Back Inhabitants hath very much Impaired my health being often obliged in the day to want the Common necessaries of Life, and in the night to be contented the shade of a Large tree for a Lodging as for my Congregation at Radnor it is in a very flourishing Condition, and as to my own Conduct in Generall I appeal to my reverend Commiſsary who is a Gent^{n} equally beloved and admired for his behaviour Piety and good Conduct, I hope your Lordshipp will Excuse this presumption and believe me to be wth all respect Imaginable

My Lord y^{r} Lordship's most Obedient
& most Humble Servant
GRIFFITH HUGHES.

Mr. Hughes to the Secretary "S. P. G."

RADNOR, June 25th 1736.

REV^{D} SIR.

I hope by this time the Honble Society are Informed by the hands, of the Revd M. Commiſsary Johnson, of my being at Barbadoes, the Chief Reason of my going there was as unexpected as unavoidable, and nothing but an absolute necessity, would have oblig'd me to quit my Mission without the Previous Consent of the Society. At the Earnest Request of a very considerable number of both Welch & English that live near Tolpahockin 70 miles from Town I officiated there & at Canestogo, at Sundry times; But the Fatigue of returning home by Saturday night to take Care of the Churches more particularly under my care, & the great Difficulty of travailing into so Remote a part of the Country, with severall Inconveniences too

tedious to be mentioned, threw me into a very Ill state of health, my Physicians were of opinion that a Sudden change of air would be absolutely necessary for me, especially to one of the Leeward Islands, and if I found no benefit there to return to England, wch I resolved upon rather then Run the hazard of my Life by staying. And as it has always been my greatest ambition, to have my conduct approv'd on by the Hon^{e} Socy I hope they are too Indulgent to be Displeased at a fault (if it be such) not in my Power to prevent without Immenent Danger.—I had no sooner arrived at Bbds but I found great Benefit by the Change of air, soon after the Rectory of St Lucy's Parish became vacant wch by the Earnest Request of the Revd M. Commy Johnson I was prevailed upon to accept. I enjoy'd it for near three months, & then obtained a Lycence from the Honourable James Dottin Esqr our Commander in Chief to Return to Pensilvania: for 4 months, where I now officiate at Radnor & Perquihoma—at the expiration of which time I design with the Hon^{e} Society, to return to Barbadoes, then beg leave to Resign my Mission, praying that the Honble Society will be pleased to supply it wth another as soon as possible: whether my Diligence to assist at severall other places, besides my Churches at Radnor & Perquihoma will in the least entitle me, to that part of my Salary due in my absence must be left to the Generosity of the Honorable Society, I hope I can say without vanity that whilst I continued in the Province I have Discharged my Duty to the utmost of my Power, & I believe to the Generall Satisfaction of all under my care; To make my unavoidable absence more Easy to them some time in the Fall before I went to Barbadoes, I have been at a very great Expence in Publishing a Welch Pamphlett, upon Death, Judgment, Heaven & Hell; and have Distributed near 150 Coppies Gratis among the poorer sort, upon my arrival at Pensilvania I received from M. Commis^{y} Cummings The favour of Hon^{e} Societies 2 Letters, with the Books as Specified; and most humbly beg Leave to put the Hon^{e} Society in mind,

that some time agoe they were pleased to supply us Gratis, with a very considerable number of such small Tracts which render these allmost entirely needless. The Welch Books which we so much wanted here are some small Compendium of Divinity, such as the Practice of Piety, the whole Duty of Man the Rev^d Mr. Pritchard's Divine Poems, & Common Prayer Books. The Bibles wch the Hon^e Society were pleased to send, shall be Distributed according to Direction—In hopes of being favoured with an Answer I Remain with all due Respects, The Hon^e Societies most obedient and most Humble Servant

GRIFFITH HUGHES.

[*Same to same.*]

RADNOR IN PENSILVANIA, Nov. 19th 1736.

MAY IT PLEASE THE HONORABLE SOCIETY:

In my last, I have done myself the pleasure of acquainting the Hon^e Society of my unexpected, as well as unavoidable necessity of being at Barbadoes, and and of my Return To this Province, where I have officiated, not only at Radnor, but at severall other places, for these five months past—whether this without mentioning the Severall Extraordinary fatigues, I have had & undergone will entitle me to at least three months Salary I Leave to the Hon^e Societies Discretion & pleasure—I am now preparing for the Barbadoes & humbly beg Leave to Resign my Mission not without a gratefull sence of the Generous support I have so Long enjoyed, wishing the Honble Society all Success Imaginable I remain their most Humble & obedient Servant

GRIFFITH HUGHES.